

## Smile Mask Syndrome

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Summary: Ratio and Murasaki know each other too well.

### Smile Mask Syndrome

((i shouldn't be writing more things.))

\* \* \*

><p>Sometimes Ratio chases after a dream he knows he'll never reach. Those times are when an illness becomes an incurable illness " one simple word enough to nurse the stress in his core and cast feeble hope into the deep depths of despair. Sometimes Ratio dives after that light but drowns through intoxication.<p>

It'd been a bad day. Birthday'd relapsed, fainting in the middle of the street. Ratio would have carried him to the hospital himself had the emergency vehicle not arrived when it did. If the two of them hadn't been on a walk, if Birthday hadn't wanted to teach him how to skip stones, then Ratio would have had his car with him and Birthday would have arrived sooner.

Ratio should be with him, but he isn't. Birthday'd kicked him out after he forgets to eat (again). Birthday will be disappointed when he finds out that Ratio's on a date with his third(? fifth?) drink that evening.

Ratio thinks about how Birthday's stones had skimmed. Once, twice, sometimes three.

His had simply plummeted into the water.

The chair beside him screeches as it's pulled out; scratches on a chalkboard, too loud.

"You look like shit."

He's in Ratio's blind spot. Ratio doesn't have the energy to turn around.

"I'm not surprised."

There's no need for Murasaki to ask. There's only one reason Ratio ever calls.

Murasaki peels off the fingers clutching Ratio's drink, and Ratio closes his eyes to make his grip relax. It sounds like payment is being handled, though it could also sound like disappointmentâ€"Ratio blocks it out, so the next thing he knows is Murasaki shaking his shoulder. Ratio's only awake enough to blink.

He doesn't receive a sigh, though the ever-present lines in Murasaki's face soften, and Ratio is hauled out of the premises through force alone.

The interior of Murasaki's car is very different. Ratio's back can't remember what a classic car seat is like, since his own are racing style. Better to support him.

The door closes. Ratio's left alone to stare blankly at the dashboard and centre console.

\_Silly Ratio\_, Birthday'd call him. His grin would be faintly faltering beneath concerned eyes, like it is every time he learns of Ratio's trystsâ€"\_lovers should be people, not drugs. You should know how clingy they are, doctor.\_

The door to the driver's side opens, and Murasaki slides in. He's holding two bottles of chilled tea. Ratio vaguely remembers there's a vending machine near the car park.

Ratio doesn't want to drive. He'll need to pick up his car tomorrow.

"Here."

Murasaki holds a bottle out to him. Ratio takes it. His stomach tells him fluids are a bad idea, but he's polite enough to break the seal and drink some anyway.

The two sit together in silence.

"...Thanks."

Murasaki just nods. There's no \_it will get better\_, no \_I'm sure you'll find a cure someday\_. Murasaki is the partner in Nice's shadow, relegated to backup; he's lost his Minimum for nearly four months now â€" Hamatora no longer takes on all the jobs they used to.

And Ratio isâ€"

\* \* \*

><p>"It sucks," says Murasaki.<p>

Ratio leans back against the head-rest. "It really does."

Birthday will find out. Murasaki understands. They always will.

\* \* \*

><p>((this might be extended to a drabble series.<br>please consider  
leaving something on your way out. thanks.))

End  
file.